

distributed among the coast are of substantial commercial, recreational, environment importance and economic benefit to the Atlantic States and our Nation.

Unfortunately, proper management of these species is often hampered by the fact that no single government entity has exclusive authority over them. Because of this, harvest and management of the Atlantic coastal resources has historically been subject to disparate, inconsistent, and intermittent State and Federal regulations.

To help address this complication, Congress passed the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act since 1993.

Since its inception, Mr. Speaker, this law has been an effective mechanism for supporting and encouraging the development, implementation, and enforcement of effective interstate conservation and management measures for the Atlantic coastal fishery resources.

I fully support the reauthorization of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his authorship of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers; but I would just like to say in conclusion, I would like to thank the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) for his cooperation. It makes one feel very good to have the kind of bipartisan cooperation that we have had on this and many other bills in our subcommittee. So I thank the gentleman for his cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as the ranking Democrat of the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans and Wildlife and Refuge, I also want to certainly compliment my good friend, the chairman of our subcommittee, for his leadership and for the cooperative way that we have worked closely for the past 2 years since my membership in that capacity in this subcommittee. Again, I thank my good friend for working together and cooperatively on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further speaker, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4840, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

## EXPLORATION OF THE SEAS ACT

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2090) to direct the Secretary of Commerce to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanographic Program Advisory Panel to report to the Congress on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanography program, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2090

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Exploration of the Seas Act".*

### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

*Congress finds the following:*

(1) During the past 100 years, scientists working with marine fossils, both underwater and high in the mountains, have traced the origins of life on Earth to the sea, beginning approximately 3 billion years ago. Today, life on our planet remains dependent on the vitality of the sea.

(2) More than two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by water, with oceans and inland seas accounting for almost 140 million square miles.

(3) The United Nations forecasts a worldwide population of 8.9 billion by the year 2050, a 50 percent increase from 5.9 billion in 1999. As this trend in population growth continues, increasing demands will be placed on ocean and coastal resources, not only as a result of population growth in coastal regions, but also from the need to harvest increasing amounts of marine life as a source of food to satisfy world protein requirements, and from the mining of energy-producing materials from offshore resource deposits.

(4) The ocean remains one of the Earth's last unexplored frontiers. It has stirred our imaginations over the millennia, led to the discovery of new lands, immense mineral deposits, and reservoirs of other resources, and produced startling scientific findings. Recognizing the importance of the marine environment, the need for scientific exploration to expand our knowledge of the world's oceans is crucial if we are to ensure that the marine environment will be managed sustainably.

(5) The seas possess enormous economic and environmental importance. Some ocean resources, such as fisheries and minerals, are well recognized. Oil use has increased dramatically in recent times, and the sea bed holds large deposits of largely undiscovered reserves. Other ocean resources offer promise for the future. In addition to fossil fuels, the ocean floor contains deposits of gravel, sand, manganese crusts and nodules, tin, gold, and diamonds. Marine mineral resources are extensive, yet poorly understood.

(6) The oceans also offer rich untapped potential for medications. Marine plants and animals possess inestimable potential in the treatment of human illnesses. Coral reefs, sometimes described as the rain forests of the sea, contain uncommon chemicals that may be used to fight diseases for which scientists have not yet found a cure, such as cancer, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and diabetes. While the number of new chemical compounds that can be derived from land based plants and

microbial fermentation is limited, scientists have only just begun to explore the sea's vast molecular potential.

(7) In spite of the development of new technologies, comparatively little of the ocean has been studied. The leadership role of the United States has been eroded by a gradual decrease in funding support, even while public opinion surveys indicate that ocean exploration is at least as important as space exploration.

(8) The National Academy of Sciences has the means by which to study and make determinations regarding the adoption and establishment of a coordinated oceanography program for the exploration of the seas, in which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration could participate in a role similar to that of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration with regard to the International Space Station.

### SEC. 3. COORDINATED OCEANOGRAPHIC PROGRAM ADVISORY PANEL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act and subject to the availability of appropriations, the Secretary of Commerce shall contract with the National Academy of Sciences to establish the Coordinated Oceanography Program Advisory Panel (in this Act referred to as the "Panel"), comprised of experts in ocean studies, including individuals with academic experience in oceanography, marine biology, marine geology, ichthyology, and ocean related economics.

(b) CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON.—The Panel shall elect a chairperson and a vice-chairperson.

(c) TERMINATION.—The Panel shall cease to exist 30 days after submitting its final report and recommendations pursuant to section 4.

### SEC. 4. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—No later than 18 months after its establishment, the Panel shall report to the Committee on Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate on the feasibility and social value of a coordinated oceanography program. In preparing its report, the Panel shall examine existing oceanographic efforts and the level of coordination or cooperation between and among participating countries and institutions.

(b) INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP.—To assist in making its feasibility determination under subsection (a), the Panel shall convene an international workshop with participation from interested nations and a broad range of persons representing scientists, engineers, policy makers, regulators, industry, and other interested parties.

(c) FINAL REPORT.—The Panel shall include in its final report recommendations for a national oceans exploration strategy, which will—

(1) define objectives and priorities, and note important scientific, historic, and cultural sites;

(2) promote collaboration among research organizations;

(3) examine the potential for new ocean exploration technologies;

(4) describe those areas of study in which national or international oceanographic cooperation is currently being undertaken;

(5) identify areas of study in which knowledge of the oceans is inadequate;

(6) ensure coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Protected Area Center;

(7) ensure that newly discovered organisms with medicinal or commercial potential are identified for possible research and development; and

(8) identify countries and organizations that would be likely to participate in a coordinated oceanography program.

(d) IMPLEMENTATION.—If the Panel determines that a coordinated oceanography program is feasible and has significant value for advancing mankind's knowledge of the ocean, the Panel shall include in its final report recommendations